

Department of Justice
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Eastern District of California

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Fourth Defendant in Unemployment Benefits Fraud Scheme Sentenced to over Four Years in Prison

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Russell White III, 38, of San Jose, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Morrison C. England Jr. to four years and three months in prison for his role in a scheme to defraud the state of California by filing false unemployment insurance claims, U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced.

According to court documents, between July 22, 2015, and July 14, 2016, White conspired with others to defraud the state of California. Pamela Emanuel, 58, of San Jose, worked as a tax compliance representative for the California Employment Development Department (EDD). She allegedly used her position to access the personal identifying information of workers throughout California, and she and her conspirators used that information to file fraudulent unemployment claims in the names of the unknowing victims.

White participated in the scheme by receiving and facilitating EDD documents at two Turlock addresses associated or controlled by him and using at least 12 EDD debit cards issued in the names of identity-theft victims to withdraw the fraudulently obtained benefits. In total, the conspirators filed at least 269 false claims seeking over \$2.4 million in fraudulent benefits. EDD's actual overpayment was approximately \$887,199.

“Russell White engaged in a scheme with his co-defendants to defraud the California Employment Development Department by filing for unemployment insurance (UI) benefits in the names of identity theft victims who were not entitled to such benefits. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to protect the integrity of the UI system from those who exploit these benefit programs,” said Quentin Heiden, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge, Los Angeles Region, U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General.

This case is the product of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the California Employment Development Department, Investigations Division. Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Schuller Hitchcock is prosecuting the case.

Three other co-conspirators have pleaded guilty and have been sentenced in relation to this scheme. On August 16, 2018, Brittany Maunakea was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and ordered to pay \$139,000 in restitution. On September 20, 2018, Sergio Doriente Sanchez Reyna was sentenced to four years and three months in prison and ordered to pay \$436,000 in restitution. On February 22, 2019, Gregory Lee of Antioch was sentenced to nine years in prison and ordered to pay \$353,000 in restitution. The charges against Emanuel are pending; she is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.